

The Cornelius Stoothoff House
Middlebush Road (County Road No. 31)
South Middlebush, Franklin Township
Somerset County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-674

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Cornelius Stoothoff House*
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South Middlebush**, Franklin Township
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Owner: Mrs. Charles R. Gunther (occupant)

Date of Erection: Middle of 18th century

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Cornelius Stoothoff (1698-1781)

Present Condition: Original, well maintained. South front door and portico, also most window sash are not original

Number of Stories: One and one-half over part cellar

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - local red shale rock in lime mortar

Exterior walls - hewn timber frame brick filled; shingled (front partly replaced by clapboards)

Interior walls - lath and plaster on frame studding; board partitions in minor garret

Chimneys - brick, built inside gable end walls

Roof - gable, wood shingled

Flooring - modern hardwood over original wide board in living rooms

* Parsonage 1803-1826 of the Rev. James S. Cannon, dominie of the Ref. Dutch Church of Six Mile Run 1796-1826.

** This crossroad, 3 miles southwest of Middlebush and $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles northwest of Franklin Park (formerly Six Mile Run), appears as Pleasant Plains on the County Atlas map of the township, 1873. It is now known locally as Laird's Corner, in honor of the storekeeper there.

Historical Data:

The identification of this local version of the Dutch Colonial farmhouse as above stated is made possible by search of the title to the property as recorded in the County archives.

Thus, it appears that one Cornelius Stoothoff (1698-1781) was the original owner of this house, its design and the details of its interior woodwork being of pre-Revolution style^(a). The date of his removal from the paternal home in Flatlands, Long Island, to Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, has not been established here, deeds by which he acquired his lands in the latter place not being found on record. But it is of record that he and his wife Maria had their daughter Maria baptized 26 February 1749 at the local Reformed Dutch Church of Six Mile Run, evidence of his residence in the vicinity.

In his will dated 25 December 1778 and proved 27 March 1782, Cornelius Stoothoff "of Somerset County" devised his real estate to his daughter Annatje wife of Abraham Dumont and to his granddaughter Maria Cornell equally, they to pay 26 Pounds annually to his daughter Aeltje Stoothoff during her lifetime. To a grandson, Cornelius Stoothoff, he bequeathed "my clock and case", and appointed as executors, Abraham Dumont of Somerset County and Cornelius Cornell of Middlesex County.^(b)

(a) Cornelius Stoothoff of Six Mile Run, Somerset Co., N. J., b. 1698 and d. 1781, 4th of the 6 brothers, all of whom settled in that region, sons of Gerret Elbertse Stoothoff of Flatlands, Kings Co., L.I., N.Y., who d. there 30 Mar. 1730. His children were: a son (name not found, but evidently died before 1778); and daughters Annatje who mar. Abraham Dumont, Aeltje unmar., and Maria bapt. 26 Feb. 1749 who mar. Cornelius Cornell and had a dau. Maria Cornell b. 1 Apr. 1765, d. 5 Sept. 1783, who mar. John Nevius of Millstone. (T.G. Bergen, Register of the Early Settlers of Kings Co., L.I., p. 283. Register of R.D. Church of Six Mile Run, Somerset Co., N.J., 1743-1805, publ. in Somerset Co. Hist. Quart. VIII, 125 and 219).

(b) Abstract from original will now filed in office of Secretary of State. See abstract publ. in N. J. Archives, XXXV, 376.

It is said that his daughter Annatje Dumont and his granddaughter Maria Cornell having inherited his real estate, conveyed a 151 acre part thereof to the latter's husband, John Nevius (1761-1807), by unrecorded deeds of 22 Nov. 1782 and 23 April 1784, in which it was described as bounded north by lands of Peter Nevius*, west by Millstone River, south by lands of Cornelius Stoothoff, and east by the Great Road.^(c) Apparently (since the boundary lines are not given by surveyor's measurements in the abstract of those deeds cited) that 151 acre tract is identical with the one next described, as the boundaries certainly coincide. How the title passed from John Nevius or from the estate of Cornelius Stoothoff, deceased, to the following named owner, does not appear on record in the public archives.

Thus, by deed of 10 January 1803, one Garret Polhemus^(d) and wife Jane, of Franklin Township, Somerset County, conveyed to the Rev. James Spencer Cannon of same place, for \$4,312.50, a farm of 150 acres there, describing it as extending northwest nearly a mile and a half to the Millstone River from a frontage of 1180 feet on Middlebush Road,

*The History of that Peter Nevius farm is traced in our survey NJ-673.

(c) A.V.D. Honeyman, Joannes Nevius and His Descendants, 1900, p. 414

(d) Garret Polhemus, d. 20 Dec. 1837 in 64th yr. per gravestone in South Middlebush cem., having married Jane Hageman who d. 28 Nov. 1832 in 60th yr., and had issue viz: Daniel bapt. 10 Jan. 1796, in R.D. Ch. of Six Mile Run, Johannah bapt. 29 Oct. 1797, Cornelia bapt. 12 Apr. 1801 who married William Suydam, and Joseph H. Bapt. 4 Nov. 1804 who d. 21 Jan. 1873. (Somerset County History Quart. V, 218; VIII, 272-276). He was apparently a son of that Daniel Polhemus of Montgomery Township, Somerset Co., whose will dated 6 Oct. 1813 and proved 9 Apr. 1814 names wife Cornelia and children: Abraham, Isaac, Henry, Garret, Peter, Daniel, John, Martha wf. of Abr. Stryker, Elizabeth wf. of Peter Garrison and Cornelia wf. of Abr. Brokaw.

and reciting the tract as "formerly belonging to Cornelius Stoothoff," and its southern corner on the road as being "near the School House now called Pleasant Plains." Apparently, grantor occupied this farm at the date of this conveyance, but he may have lived elsewhere in the vicinity then and certainly at the date of his will, 28 November 1837, in which he is described as of Franklin Township.

This grantee, the Rev. James S. Cannon^(e) evidently occupied this farmhouse near one of his two charges, the Reformed Dutch Church at Six Mile Run, until his resignation in 1826. By a deed of 2 January 1833, he and his wife Catharine, being then of New Brunswick, conveyed the same 150 acres to John V. B. Varick of Jersey City for \$5000, reciting that the premises were then traversed by the (recently excavated) Delaware and Raritan Canal. Evidently the farm was let to tenants for some years after this transfer.

John V. B. Varick, the next owner abovenamed, describing himself as a farmer in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., made his will 25 February 1832, directed his executors to sell any of his real estate in New York City or elsewhere if considered necessary.

(e) James Spencer Cannon, D.D., b. 1766 in Island of Curacoa, W.I., licensed to preach in Reformed Dutch Church 1796, pastor of Six Mile Run (Franklin Park) Ch. 1796-1826 with Millstone Ch. 1796-1807, resided at Six Mile Run, prof. of Eccles., Hist., Metaphysics, etc., in Rutgers College, New Brunswick, N.J., 1818-1852, D.D. from Rutgers 1811, d. 1852. (Snell, Hist. of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey, 1881, pp. 614, 791 and 821).

Accordingly, by deed of 4 November 1835 the four executors conveyed to Abraham Suydam^(f) of New Brunswick, N.J., this 150 acre farm in Franklin Township, Somerset County, N.J., for \$5,553.21, excepting the 7.6 acres sold to the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company. Subsequently, by deed of 14 April 1836, in which he is described as of North Brunswick Township, Middlesex County, Suydam acquired from Peter G. Nevius and wife Margaret, of Franklin Township, Somerset County, for \$827.19 a tract of 21 acres extending 3300 feet along the southwest line of the farm abovesaid, so that his frontage on Middlebush Road was increased to 1477 feet. Evidently Suydam did not himself reside on this farm.

For, by deed of 1st April 1839, he, as Abraham Suydam of the City of New Brunswick, N.J., with wife Caroline, conveyed the same farm as 164 acres to John L. Suydam of Franklin Township, Somerset County. Supposedly, the grantee was then on the farm. He died 18 September 1882 in New Brunswick, having by will directed that "my son Lawrence J. Suydam^(g) shall become the owner, at a fair price and valuation of the easterly 100 acre part of my farm in Franklin Township, Somerset County," the westerly part being in possession of another son, John E. Suydam. Testator devised also to the son Lawrence "my pew in the Church at Six Mile Run"

(f) William Suydam married Cornelia, daughter of Garret Polhemus of Middlebush(a), lived and died there. His brother Abram Suydam was a successful merchant in New Brunswick and while president of the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of that city was murdered (3 Dec. 1840) by Peter Robinson, his debtor, a carpenter, at the latter's house there. (Snell cited before, p. 806, and Trenton State Gazette, 16 Dec. 1840).

(g) The map of Franklin Township, publ. in Beers' Atlas of Somerset County 1873 shows the house (here considered) as then occupied by one L. Suydam and the next house west of it by one J. E. Suydam.

by a codicil dated 5 March 1874 and in one dated 25 March 1879 qualifies this legacy "since the destruction of said church by fire."

Lawrence J. Suydam, a son and devisee abovenamed, acquired the eastern front of farm from his father's estate by deeds of 7 April 1883, for \$7655, it being described therein as containing 109 acres. He resided there in Franklin Township and died 3 January 1919. In accordance with the terms of his will, his executors sold his farm and by their deed of 27 March 1920 conveyed it to Charles R. Gunther and wife, of same township, as still containing 109 acres.

Mr. Gunther occupied the place and died 2 December 1926 leaving a widow and six children, and they remained there as owners and occupants at the time of our survey of this house in March 1941.

Reference:

Search of title in land and probate records of Somerset County by James Hanlon, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 30 December 1940, and in the earlier records now filed in the Office of Secretary of State, by William Brown, H.A.B.S. research editor, reported 5 and 13 June 1941

Louis D. Cook

Supervising Historian

17 June 1941

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer